

# Arthritis Leading Cause of Adult Disability Across Nation, Kansas

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Arthritis and rheumatism are the leading causes of disability according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC data also shows that the number of Americans with a disability who have heart trouble, diabetes and stroke combined do not equal the number of persons with arthritis. Of Kansans who are over 18 years of age and who report having doctor-diagnosed arthritis or chronic joint symptoms, 29 percent report having an activity limitation, according to preliminary data from the 2003 Kansas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

May is National Arthritis Awareness Month. Part of educating the public about the impact of arthritis is highlighting the percentage of adult Kansans who report having activity limitations because of arthritis or related conditions. It is important that Kansans who have arthritis practice self-management techniques to manage their disease properly to prevent further disability. One technique a person with arthritis can use to improve their quality of life is to move from inactivity to forms of physical activity that relieve arthritic symptoms.

Kansans who have arthritis are encouraged to work with their primary care physician or rheumatologist to find the method that best helps them address their disease, including how physical activity fits into an effective self-management plan. While medications and surgery have made a significant impact on the management of arthritis in recent years, there is growing evidence that physical activity and weight control greatly reduce the disabling effect of this disease.

The Kansas Arthritis Program and the Arthritis Foundation chapters of Kansas and Western Missouri/Greater Kansas City have partnered since 1999 to promote the Arthritis Foundation Aquatics Program, PACE (People with Arthritis Can Exercise), and Arthritis Self-Help Course. These programs have been scientifically evaluated and have been shown to decrease disability by increasing muscle strength, energy, maintaining or improving activities of daily living and providing a number of other benefits.

The Kansas Arthritis Program Website identifies where these programs can be found: [www.kdhe.state.ks.us/arthritis](http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/arthritis). A resource map of the state shows in which counties there are rheumatologists, arthritis-related physical activity programs, support groups and other self-management information. The state's latest arthritis data, success stories of persons with arthritis who have benefited from physical activity, and links to other helpful resources are also featured on the Web site.